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SUBJECT: SLOVAK ACTIVISTS ON CUBA

REFTEL: STATE 152813

The GOS is supportive of pressing for political change in Cuba and working more closely with civil society leaders. In Slovakia, there are NGOs and former political dissidents who frequently speak out about human rights violations in Cuba. The following is a list of organizations and individuals who have traveled to Cuba and/or have contacts with Cuban civil society (as requested in reftel):

-- Laszlo Nagy, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights, Minorities, and the Status of Women. He participated in a non-official parliamentary visit with Slovaks, Czechs, and Swedes this spring. He frequently participates in public discussions and makes statements in the press about events in Cuba. Nagy told poloffs in April that he believes the world ignored Cuba in 1989 focusing instead on the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block and he would like to do more to help. He also stated that the Cuban opposition is very evolved compared to the pre-1989 Czechoslovak political situation and there is more potential for their direct involvement in developing policy frameworks for the future.

-- Kalman Petocz, Slovak Ambassador to the UN in Geneva. Petocz is also very active on Cuba issues. Two years ago he mobilized a vote in the UN that almost resulted in him being recalled from his position.

-- The Pontis Foundation, main contact: Lenka Surotchak. The Pontis Foundation operates a program called the Institute for Citizen Diplomacy, which brings speakers to Slovakia, supports dissident networks, and fundraises for the dissident community in Cuba. They helped to lead a petition drive for Oswald Paya to receive a Nobel peace award, which was spearheaded by Nagy. Paya also visited Slovakia last year through this program.

-- People in Need, main contact: Patrick Kosicky. The Slovak branch of People in Need (based in the Czech Republic) operates a Slovak Committee for Cuban Democracy and actively fundraises for the families of dissidents. This organization mainly focuses on raising awareness within the Slovak populace of human rights violations in Cuba.

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